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THE

DIVINE LIFE

AND

THE NEW BIRTH,

AS EXHIBITED

IN THE SCRIPTURES AND BY THE CHURCH:

AN ESSAY.

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"It is the Spirit that quickeneth."—ST. JOHN vi, 63.

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."—ST. JOHN iii, 5.

"And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear."—ST. MARK iv, 26-28.

"The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."—ST. LUKE xvii, 20-21.

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P R E F A C E.

IT is as true now as it was in the days of John Locke, that controversies and disputes of all sorts are encouraged and perpetuated by the ambiguity of language—by the use of leading terms in different senses. The only remedy for this is, precise definition of terms, and a rigid adherence, by both parties, to the definition agreed upon. Unless men will employ this method of coming to an agreement, or of ascertaining their real differences, controversy is both an idle waste of time and strength, and a gratuitous provocative to animosity and strife.

To ascertain the precise meaning of the terms prefixed to this Essay—The Divine Life and the New Birth—is the first and the most important step in arriving at some issue of the controversies respecting them. I am far from thinking that those controversies are mere logomachies. On the contrary, I have shown that there are three leading and distinct systems of theology in reference to the subjects which these words import. But I am very sure, that with a large number of the adherents of two of these systems, the controversy is, in a very great degree, a logomachy, or dispute about words.

There is in each of the systems now referred to, as there must be in every system that receives the sanction of a respectable body of men, a certain portion of plain and vital truth, which gives to the system its vitality, and its hold upon those who have adopted it. But on account of the use of the same word in different senses, this portion

of truth seems to be denied by the disputants on the other side. Thus the controversy becomes interminable, and the feelings of the parties become more and more exasperated.

Leaving out of view all modern systems of theology, and the authority of all great names of any party, I have endeavored to determine the precise and relative meaning of the terms prefixed to this Essay by a reference to two authorities only—the Word of God and the Church of God. Many candid persons of opposing parties will find in the result that truth which they have been accustomed most sacredly to revere ; while a large proportion of our communion, belonging to no party, will see in that result an entire coincidence with the views which they have always entertained.

It is true that most of us are in the habit of using such words as regeneration, conversion, &c., in a loose popular way, without intending thereby to express or to endorse a system of theology. But as the popular use of these words is now the basis of a very erroneous system, it would seem to be better to confine ourselves to the strict, technical, and Scriptural sense of those words.

THE DIVINE LIFE AND THE NEW BIRTH.

THE subjects indicated in the title to this Essay, have acquired a new interest and importance on account of recent events in England and in this country. The great excitement in England on the question of Baptismal Regeneration, undoubtedly proceeds from the fact that so few persons have acquired clear, distinct, and comprehensive views of these two subjects. A confused perception of the beginning and progress of the Divine Life in the soul of man, is unquestionably the source of the darkness which has fallen upon the mind of one of the most loved and trusted of the Shepherds of Christ's flock in this country; and is the occasion of much misapprehension and angry controversy, here as well as in the Mother Church. This confused perception of one of the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, proceeds from the fact that so many of our theologians derive their views from *Systems of Divinity*, rather than from the Bible and the Prayer-Book. In each of these systems, particular words are used in a technical sense, peculiar to the system; and when the students of either of these systems find the same words in the Bible or the Prayer-Book, they interpret them according to this technical sense. Of course, until this source of delusion is removed, the students of opposite systems may reason and dispute forever without even coming to a mutual understanding of the sense in which they employ the same words.

It is not our purpose now to examine any of the recent controversial publications on these subjects. But we do intend to present an analysis, as full and perfect as our limits will allow, of the teaching of the Gospel and of the Church in reference to them. It is not possible that any subject in the whole range of Christian theology can be more practical than this one; for according to the conceptions which we entertain concerning it, will be our estimate of the way of salvation.

There are literally now, with regard to the beginning of a Christian life, three Gospels currently preached in the world. That Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life, is indeed earnestly declared by nearly all who call themselves Christians.

But with regard to the commencement of the Divine Life in the soul of man, there are, we repeat, three Gospels, or systems which profess to be such.

One is the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who came into the world not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. That Gospel teaches,

1st. That the entire race of man is by nature fallen, degenerate, dead. That each human being is so “far gone from original righteousness, as *of his own nature to be inclined to evil*,” so that “the flesh *lusteth always contrary to the Spirit*,” and “*is not subject to the law of God*.” Art. 9.

2d. That our Saviour Christ suffered death upon the Cross for the redemption of all mankind; and made there a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world.

3d. That from the right hand of the Eternal Majesty, where He ever liveth to make intercession for us, He hath given gifts unto men, even the inestimable gift of His Holy Spirit, to be the Teacher, Monitor, and Guide of the souls for which He died; and to dwell in the hearts of men, the principle of a new and Divine Life, the bond of reunion between God and man.

4th. That this redemption, and this consequent gift, is as extensive and as universal as the previous condemnation which had come into the world by sin. Accordingly we are assured that the Sacrifice of Christ, and the benefits of that Sacrifice, were made over to mankind—to the entire race of man—from the foundation of the world.

5th. The Divine Life thus given to every man is a germ, a seed, which does not necessarily, and by the force of the mere gift, destroy and take the place of the carnal nature, but coëxists with that carnal nature, and enters into conflict with all that is evil and depraved in the natural life; and, if properly entertained and nurtured, will ultimately overcome, mortify, and kill all the evil of corrupt nature, and substitute for that evil, purity, goodness, and every Divine affection.

6th. The Church of Christ, with all its appliances of faith and holiness, has been appointed as the last, the fullest, and the most perfect of the means and instrumentalities for the nurture and development of the Divine Life, from its embryo existence as a power in the soul of man, through all the successive stages of growth, to the maturity of perfect manhood in Christ Jesus; and to be introduced into that Church by Baptism is the second birth—the birth of water and of the Spirit.

We design presently to offer the proofs of each of these propositions.

One of the other Gospels to which we have referred, teaches,

1st. That the Gift of God, the Holy Spirit, the Divine Life, is imparted only to the Baptized. That it begins in Baptism, and is inseparably connected with that Sacrament.

2d. That the Divine Life, by the mere gift thereof, effectually and at once destroys the carnal life—the whole evil of corrupt nature—remitting the subject of this gift to the state of Adam before the fall, making him pure, immaculate, without sin.

3d. The same system teaches that this pure and spotless being may, nevertheless, fall, as Adam fell, by sin ; in which case the Divine Life, before imparted, is in its turn utterly extinguished and destroyed ; and the carnal life, by an anticipated resurrection, reappears in full strength and development, and resumes its previous sway and mastery over the soul.

4th. For this new and terrible incident of humanity, unknown to the true Gospel, and unprovided for there, the new Gospel has invented a supplemental Sacrament of far more practical value and efficacy than the Sacrament of Baptism which our blessed Lord provided. For, according to the system we are now describing, the supplemental Sacrament of Penance reconveys the Divine Life to the soul in full maturity and strength, just as often as it may be forfeited and lost by sin.

There is yet “another Gospel,” very similar in some of its features to the last mentioned, but differing from it in other particulars. It agrees with it in denying peremptorily that the Gift of God, the Holy Spirit, the Divine Life, is bestowed impartially upon all mankind. But instead of restricting this gift to the Baptized, and looking upon Baptism as the instrument by which it is conferred, this other Gospel teaches,

1st. That the gift of the Eternal Spirit is bestowed only upon those whom it terms converted persons, and who have passed through certain experiences, and have been moved by a peculiar class of feelings designated as the New Birth.

So far the maintainers of this Gospel, which constitutes the popular theology of the day, go together in entire harmony of statement. But at this point two parties are presented to our view, who go as far asunder as possible. The smaller of these teaches,

2d. That the converted persons, upon whom the Holy Spirit is bestowed, have been previously designated by an eternal decree ; and that the recipients of this Divine Life can never lose it, or fail to secure the everlasting reward of the righteous.

The larger class of the adherents of the popular theology maintain, instead of the last proposition,

3d. That men may fall from grace. That the Divine Life may be often lost and recovered ; and that the way to recover it is to repeat the process by which it was first obtained—that

is, by certain well known appliances, to stimulate the feelings, and to seek for the experiences which were at first regarded as the beginning and the assurance of the Divine Life.

This modification of the popular theology agrees, it will be perceived, with the Romish system previously described, in the principle, that the Divine Life can be thus repeatedly and entirely lost, and as often and as suddenly regained. But it differs again from that system in this, that instead of going to the Priest to receive the Divine Life anew from him, *through the Instrumentality of a newly invented Sacrament*, the devotee of the last system *waits upon the exercises of a protracted meeting*, until the desired point of excitement, that may be regarded as a Divine impulse, is reached.

It is not our purpose now to encounter or to expose either of these false systems—the human substitutes for the counsels of Heavenly Wisdom. The simple description of them in the plain didactic method which we have adopted, will enable every student of the Bible to perceive how far they deviate from that full and perfect standard of truth. And the positive proof which we intend to offer of the several propositions of the true Gospel will be the best refutation of these opposing dogmas. But as both of these human systems derive a good deal of popular favor and apparent plausibility from a misapprehension of certain expressions in the Epistles of St. John, we will begin our examination by an attempt to ascertain the true meaning of those expressions.

As our 5th proposition provides for a perpetual growth of the Divine Life, from the first beginnings to the highest attainments of holiness, so it allows for the continued existence of the evil of corrupt nature, not yet subdued, in those who have received the Holy Spirit: and perhaps never to be subdued, on account of the faithlessness of the subject of this Divine grace. For as the evil nature and the Divine nature have entered into antagonism in the same person, the evil may be so entertained as to be always predominant, and ultimately to drive away the Spirit of life and holiness.

To this existence and possible triumph of a sinful disposition, in the subject of Divine grace, the expressions of St. John, before referred to, are objected. They are the following: “Who-soever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world.” “We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” 1st St. John iii, 9; v, 4, 18.

These are certainly very strong and emphatic expressions.

But if taken literally, and apart from the purpose of the Apostle, they will prove too much for any system of theology. For thus taken, these expressions would prove that whosoever is born of God can *never, under any contingency*, commit sin. But this is directly opposed to universal experience, to the whole tenor of Scripture, to many positive declarations of the same Apostle, and to every theory of religion. The same system of interpretation would make this very Epistle a collection of contradictions. The Apostle positively declares that "whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." iv, 15. Again, "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." v, 1.

The way to understand these and like expressions in the Epistle, is to look at its purpose. That purpose was principally to furnish to Christians a number of *practical and experimental tests of their continuance in the faith*, and of their perseverance in the way of holiness. Each one of these aphorisms is evidently designed for the use of the elect children of God, as a personal test for determining whether *they are practically living* to the new and Divine nature, or to the old and carnal nature. Interpreted by this obvious purpose of the Apostle, the whole Epistle coincides with the analogy of faith in assuming the fact of the coëxistence of the good and evil nature in every man; and of the perpetual conflict between them, until one or the other is subdued. Nothing in this Epistle, therefore, is at all repugnant to that which we have assumed to be the Church's teaching, and the Gospel plan of salvation. The Apostle simply takes several distinct and separate results of the Divine Life on the one hand, and of the Carnal Life on the other, and applies each in turn to the determination of the question, whether the common subject of both is practically and habitually living to the one or to the other. "Whosoever is born of God," is therefore equivalent, for this purpose of the Apostle, to the formula—Whosoever is truly and faithfully living under the power and influence of the new and Divine Life. Such an one acknowledges "that Jesus is the Christ." He does not willingly and habitually commit sin; but strives against the sinful disposition. By prayer, watchfulness, the practice of repentance, and other means of grace, he is gradually subduing the carnal nature—the tendency to sin; and the Divine Life is acquiring the entire mastery of his soul and body.

"The children of the Devil," on the other hand, in the sense of the Apostle, are those who submit themselves to the power of the carnal nature—who, having received the Spirit of God, the new and Divine Life, resist that Spirit, live in continual

opposition to His influence and teaching, and are thus gradually destroying the Divine Life in their souls.

Having disposed of this source of objection, we will offer now the proof of those propositions in regard to the way of Life, which we have affirmed to be the teaching of the Church of Christ.

DEATH OF ALL MANKIND IN ADAM.

1. The first proposition of the true Gospel—the foundation upon which the whole superstructure of a Christian life is built—declares, that the entire race of man is by nature fallen, degenerate, dead. That each human being is so “far gone from original righteousness, as of his own nature to be inclined to evil;” so that “the flesh lusteth *always* contrary to the Spirit,” and “is not subject to the law of God.” Art. 9.

This proposition ought to be sufficiently proved for Churchmen by the above express declaration of the article to that effect. The language and spirit of all our formularies assumes this truth as a postulate: and the testimony of reason, observation, and Scripture, all concur in the same conclusion.

From the Scripture we learn that the original penalty of transgression affixed to the one positive enactment of the Paradisaic state was death—a dissolution of the original union between God and man. “In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.” Accordingly, in that very day on which he sinned, the fallen rebel was driven forth from the place where that communion had subsisted; and cherubims and a flaming sword were stationed, “which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life.” The mortality of the body was involved in this death, as one of its ulterior consequences; but so far from constituting the principal burden of the sentence, it did not occur for several hundred years after the fall; and under the economy of grace it has been made a necessary means of relief from other consequences of the same judgment, and the passage from a world of tribulation to a heaven of glory.

It will be unnecessary to recapitulate the various familiar passages of Scripture which show the completeness and universality of the natural corruption of man. “Can a clean thing come out of an unclean?” is an interrogatory of Scripture which reason and observation answer unhesitatingly in the negative. As Adam essentially was, so his posterity must continue to be, unless the Almighty, by a further interposition, infuse a new element of life and character into His degenerate creature. To inform us of such an interposition on the part of our Heavenly Father, and of the manner of it, is the purpose

of the blessed Gospel. "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive." And what constitutes this death in Adam, and this life in Christ, the Apostle plainly tells us. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is death*; but to be spiritually minded *is life* and peace. Because the *carnal mind is enmity* against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Rom. viii, 5—8. "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Rom. viii, 13.

Here it is abundantly affirmed that the natural man is really dead unto God, and to the things of God: that he is at enmity with God, and therefore hates and opposes Him and His will. That he neither *is* nor *can be* subject to the law of God; and therefore he is incapable of good in thought, word, and deed. For as the law of God commandeth the things which are good, in thought, word, and deed, he who *cannot obey that law* must be under an inevitable incapacity to do, think, or speak, any thing that is good.

The same Apostle, in another place, states, in yet more startling terms, the utter degeneracy and deadness of mere human nature in regard to all that is good and pure. For he affirms that it is incapable of receiving or of knowing the things that are freely given to us of God—that is, all spiritual truth. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither *can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*." And he had previously illustrated this proposition by an argument derived from the nature of things. "For what man," he says, "knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man that is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." "Now we have received the Spirit of God, *that we might know* the things that are freely given to us of God." 1 Cor. ii, 12. Again: "For we know that the law is spiritual; but I am carnal, sold under sin." "For I know that in me (that is in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing." Rom. vii, 14, 18.

We have dwelt the longer upon the Scriptural testimony to this proposition, because a clear and full understanding of it is essential to a correct appreciation of all the rest of the Gospel system.

The formularies of the Church are equally full in disclaiming for the natural man all capacity for good, and in ascribing all the good of which we are conscious in ourselves to the immediate gift of God by His Holy Spirit. The Collect for peace in

the evening service declares that "all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed from God;" and cannot therefore be the dictate of the natural heart, which is at enmity with God. The address in the beginning of the Baptismal Office, says, "Forasmuch as all men are conceived and born in sin, (and that which is born of the flesh is flesh,) and they who are in the flesh *cannot please* God, but live in sin." In the Collects we find the following express, and many more implied recognitions of the same truth. "Almighty God who seest that we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves," 2d S. in Lent. "As by thy special grace preventing us, thou dost put into our minds good desires; so by thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect," Easter. "Who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men," 4th af. East. "From whom all good things do come, grant that by thy holy inspiration we may think those things that are good, and by thy merciful guiding may perform the same," 5th af. East. "Because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without thee," 1st af. Trin. "Grant to us the spirit to think and do always such things as are right; that we who cannot do any thing that is good without thee," 9th af. Trin. "Of whose only gift it cometh that thy faithful people do unto thee true and laudable service," 13th af. Trin. "Forasmuch as without thee we are not able to please thee," 19th af. Trin. "Who makest us both to will and to do those things which are good and acceptable unto thy Divine Majesty," Confirmation office. "The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such, that he cannot turn and prepare himself by his own natural strength and good works to faith and calling upon God: wherefore we have no power to do good works pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us when we have that good will." Art. 10.

To crown the whole of this testimony, the Christian Creed teaches us to believe in the Holy Ghost as the Author and Giver of Life. This, like all the articles of the Creed, is brief, but very full and expressive. If without the inspiration of the Holy Ghost there can be no true life, then the mere carnal nature, *devoid of that Spirit*, must be altogether dead unto God and the things of God; and therefore insensible to goodness, incapable of knowing God, of loving, fearing, or obeying Him.

With this ample testimony of the Scriptures and the Church reason concurs. For how can that being who is cut off from all communion with God, the Source and Fountain of good, and is at enmity with Him, be capable of doing good, or of delighting in goodness? If man's nature is essentially corrupt,

and inclined to evil, as universal observation attests, how, but by the direct inspiration of the Almighty, can that nature be turned to good, or be made capable of appreciating and enjoying that which is good!

The doctrine thus conclusively proved by so many weighty testimonies, is that which the Pelagian heresy vainly attempted to overturn. Very like to this Pelagian heresy, and as directly opposed to this doctrine, and to the testimonies by which it is established, is the notion that there were some relics of the heavenly image left in Adam, and consequently in his posterity, by which men can perform some good things, and from which are derived that amiability and nobleness of character by which many persons are distinguished. On the contrary, it has been fully proved that the natural condition of man is a death, an utter insensibility, to all goodness. There were powers and faculties left in man by the fall; but these, being cut off from the Fountain of goodness, were only and wholly inclined to evil. If, therefore, any good is found in man, its source must be elsewhere than in his own nature.

The Gospel tells us whence that goodness proceeds which we find everywhere to coëxist with the evil in the heart of man. And it further tells us how, and upon what inducement, that new capacity for goodness came into the heart of man. For, "as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the *free gift came upon all men* unto justification of life." "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. v, 18, 21.

The Scriptures last cited are at once the substance and the proof of our 2d, 3d, and 4th propositions.

UNIVERSALITY OF REDEMPTION.

2. The second proposition affirms the universality of redemption. "If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." 1 St. John ii, 1, 2.

HOLY GHOST THE SOURCE OF LIFE.

3. From the right hand of the eternal majesty where He ever liveth to make intercession for us, Christ hath sent His Holy Spirit to be the Teacher, Monitor, and Guide of the souls for which He died, and to dwell in the hearts of men the principle of a new and Divine Life—the bond of reunion between God and man. "It is the Spirit that quickeneth." St. John vi, 63. "I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life." Nicene Creed.

SPIRITUAL LIFE IMPARTED TO ALL.

4. This redemption from death, and this consequent gift of life, are as extensive and as universal as the previous condemnation which had come into the world by sin. For as the blessed Saviour came to make an atonement for the sins of all mankind, so likewise He is declared to be "the True Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." St. John i, 9.

The Apostle, indeed, makes this proposition to be the more certain and inevitable, by arguing that it must, *a fortiori*, be so. He says, "If by the offence of one many be dead, *much more* the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; *much more* they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." "Where sin abounded grace did much more abound; that as sin hath reigned unto death, *even so might grace reign* through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. v, 15—21.

It is this universality of redemption, and of the capacity of salvation, which truly entitles the revelation of Jesus Christ to be called the Gospel, or "glad tidings of great joy to all people." This was the description which the Angels gave of that which they came to announce, when at the birth of the Son of God they sang, "Peace on earth, good will to men."

But if the redemption which is in Christ Jesus was provided only for a few, and if the consequent salvation be possible only to that select number, then the message which the Angels brought would be bad news of great sorrow to all the rest of mankind: and that express declaration of the blessed Saviour himself, that "God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved," would be plainly and flatly contradicted. Our Saviour commanded His Apostles to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; calling all men to repentance and remission of sins, and teaching every man to believe that Christ died for him. But if salvation be not possible to all men, then the ministers and ambassadors of Christ would stand forth in the name of the God of Truth with a falsehood on their tongues, with which to mock and delude the unhappy sons of perdition.

To this let us only add these Scriptures, "that He by the grace of God might taste death for every man." Heb. ii, 9.

"I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." 1 Tim. ii, 1, 3, 4, 5.

But if Christ died for all, how is the benefit of His death applied to all? We have before proved that man, of his own nature, is incapable of thinking, doing, or desiring any good thing; that he is dead to goodness and to God. Redemption from death, therefore, must be something more than the satisfaction made upon the Cross for the sins of the world. It must include the gift of life—the capacity to know, fear, obey, and love God. This life, this capacity for holiness, is a necessary part of redemption, and is therefore the gift of God to all who are redeemed, to every one for whom Christ died.

Unless this new life from God be a part of the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, not only would the death and sacrifice of Christ have been vain and idle, but it would be impossible to bring men into judgment for their conduct in this life. For trust or power, and responsibility, are commensurate and inseparable. Without the first there can be no such thing as the second. Responsibility for wrong necessarily presupposes the capacity to do right. There can be no moral evil where the capacity to do good is denied. This higher life, therefore,—the power to apprehend, to love, and to do good,—must be superinduced upon human nature as a supernatural gift, in order to make the judgment of men—the acquittal of the righteous and the condemnation of the wicked—a possible thing in the Divine economy.

How then is this new and Divine Life imparted? The answer to this question explains to us the reason for the revelation to man of the adorable mystery of the Holy Trinity. As the Eternal Son became our Redeemer, Mediator, and effectual Intercessor; so, to complete the work which He began, to make effectual for our salvation His sacrifice, mediation, and intercession, the Holy Ghost was sent to dwell in the hearts of men; to be the agent of reunion between God and man; to be the source and beginning of that new life from which comes the capacity of holiness, the power to know and to love God, and to obey and love His commands. Therefore the Christian Creed teaches us to believe, not only in the Father Almighty, and in the Only Begotten Son, but in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of Life. Therefore it was "*expedient* for us" that, when the sacrificial work of the Son was finished, He should be received into the heavens, and send down from thence, in newness and fullness of power and manifestation, this Divine

Source and Author of Life, to abide with men and to restore them to the lost image of God.

And, as in the counsels of the Divine economy the Son was slain from the foundation of the world, that men might be pardoned and accepted for His sake, so was the gift of the Holy Ghost, the purchase of that Son's death and love, made over to mankind from the beginning, that in every man born into the world there might be a capacity for holiness and for heaven.

The Scriptural testimony to this great fact of the indwelling of the Spirit in the hearts of all men in all ages, is emphatic and conclusive. It is not probable that the wickedness of men has ever again reached the point which it had attained at the close of the Antediluvian period. And then we are informed that the Spirit had been unceasingly striving with men for their salvation; and that God was determined to cut off from the earth the hardened sinners with whom He would no longer permit that Spirit to strive and dwell.

That the same Spirit of light and life continued to dwell with men in the ages between the flood and the Advent of Messiah, is abundantly evident, not only from the necessity of the case, because essential to our probationary state, and from the fruits of the Spirit, which at all times were manifested by the sons and daughters of men, but likewise from numerous express notices of the fact in the Old Testament. "Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them," is the confession of all the people in Nehem. ix, 20. "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me," "Stablish me with thy free Spirit," were the prayers dictated by that same Spirit for the use of every one of the people of God. See numerous testimonies to the same effect.

By the agency of this all-pervading Spirit alone can the declaration of the Apostle be true, "that Jesus Christ is the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." St. Paul expressly affirms that "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." 1 Cor. xii, 7.

"The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to *all men, teaching us*, that denying ungodliness," &c. Titus ii, 11, 12. "Of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace." St. John i, 16. "This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. He that doeth truth cometh to the light that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." St. John iii, 19—21. Here the principle is fully and plainly declared, that there is no condemnation except to those who turn from the light. And as the Apostle had previously announced that the True Light had enlightened every man that came into the world, so the condemnation is as

universal as the love and choice of darkness. The parable of the talents conveys in the most striking and forcible manner the same great truth; that no more is required of any man than the use and improvement of that which has been given him.

In the Epistle to the Galatians, St. Paul thus describes the condition of every man that has lived in the world. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh : and these are contrary the one to the other : so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." He then enumerates the works of the flesh, some of which, in various degrees and proportions, have been exhibited in the life of every man. Afterwards he tells us which are the fruits of the Spirit. And of these likewise it may be confidently affirmed, that some of them, as love, joy, peace, gentleness, goodness, meekness, &c. have been beautifully manifested in every human being that has lived. Every good and pure affection that moves the heart of man is the Divine testimony within him to the *New Life* which he has received ; is the earnest of his calling to be the child of God, and the inheritor of everlasting blessedness. If, as has been abundantly proved, man can think, feel, and do no good thing, without the inspiration of God's Spirit, then every good thought, feeling, and act must of necessity manifest the presence and power of that Spirit. And the condition of every man before God is determined by the choice which each one may make to be guided by the Spirit into all holy obedience, or to be led captive by the flesh in the way of sin and death.

The Scriptures not only in a few passages declare this truth, but everywhere assume it, by appealing to the capacity which is in every human being to know, believe, and obey the truth. "Grieve not the Spirit of God ; Quench not the Spirit ; Harden not your hearts ; Resist not the Spirit ;" is the constant exhortation of the inspired word. The same thing is virtually and fully affirmed by every preacher of the Gospel in the world : for they exhort and beseech each man to believe that Jesus Christ is his Saviour ; that He hath died for him ; and that he invites and calls this sinner to come unto Him that he may be saved ; and that if he perish it will be his own fault for refusing to heed and obey this call.

This doctrine of the true Gospel, which we have thus largely proved, alone worthily and sufficiently magnifies the grace of God, "in that it wholly excludes the natural man from having any place or portion in his own salvation, by any acting, moving, or working of his own," but refers all to the quickening and informing power of God's Spirit. And "as it makes the whole salvation of man solely and alone to depend upon God, so it makes his condemnation wholly and in every respect

to be of himself." No place is left by this doctrine for the intrusion into Christian theology of the Pelagian and Socinian heresy, which exalts the light of nature, and attributes so much power and influence in the guidance of men to the natural conscience. We have seen that the light of nature in fallen man is nothing but gross darkness. That which has been falsely called such, was the True Light, in whom is Life; "and the Life was the *light* of men; and The Light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."

The vice of Pelagianism, that which made this error to be a pernicious and deadly heresy, was its denial of one of the articles of the Creed, that the Holy Ghost is the Author and Giver of all spiritual life. By assuming for man, in his natural state, a capacity to hear, receive, and believe the Gospel, it discharged the Holy Spirit from His peculiar office and operation in the work of human salvation. The doctrine that the Holy Spirit is given to every man, is therefore the precise refutation of Pelagianism: because it takes the very same facts relied upon for the support of that error, and accounts for those facts by proving them to depend upon the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Nor is it the part or province of the natural conscience to be the *guide* or the *teacher* of men. The Spirit of Truth alone can exercise that prerogative. Natural conscience is but the *avenger* seated in the soul of man, and manifesting its presence and power only by the application of the scorpion lash to the offender who has been previously taught, and who has disobeyed the instructions and monitions of the true Light, and Guide, and Teacher of men.

THE DIVINE LIFE AT FIRST A GERM COEXISTING WITH THE CARNAL LIFE. THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THEM.

5th. Our fifth proposition affirms that the Divine Life thus given to every man is a germ, a seed, which does not necessarily, and by the force of the mere gift, destroy and take the place of the carnal nature, but coexists with that carnal nature, and enters into conflict with all that is evil and depraved in the natural life; and, if properly entertained and nurtured, will ultimately overcome, mortify, and kill, all the evil of corrupt nature, and substitute for that evil, purity, goodness, and every Divine affection.

The principle here announced is in direct opposition both to the Romish theory and to the popular theology before noticed. A correct apprehension of it will disabuse the mind of the fallacies of both systems. But it is with the latter that the understandings of the people have been most seriously entangled. Each of these systems looks to a time and place when the new

Divine Life is infused into the soul in fullness of strength and vigor: and this first creation of the new man is represented to be coincident with the destruction of the old and carnal nature. One system fixes the time and place of this great change at Baptism. The other designates the real or supposed conversion of the adult subject as the precise period. The experience of universal humanity contradicts both systems, and coincides with the Gospel teaching, that the carnal and the Divine life coëxist in every human being; that a struggle ensues between them, which results in the gradual subjection and ultimate destruction of one or the other; and that according to the issue of this conflict, upon one side or the other, will be the destiny of each man for heaven or for hell. For each man will go to that place for which by the character and the issue of this conflict he is fitted and prepared.

The Gospel conveys to us this all-important truth, in many of its varied forms of instruction; by parable, analogy, and didactic teaching. The Divine Life in the soul of man is compared to the mustard-seed, which when first put into the ground is less than the least of all seeds, but presently springs up and becomes a tree in which the birds find shelter. It is the little leaven hid in two measures of meal, which gradually penetrates, and by and by leavens the whole mass. It is everywhere illustrated by the nature and condition of the physical system, commencing with an embryo existence, and passing through the varied stages of human growth and development, to the stature and maturity of men and women in Christ Jesus. So apposite is this illustration, and so minutely is it employed, that the very food adapted to the different stages of physical growth, is used to designate the kinds of instruction best fitted for the several stages of development in the Divine Life,—as milk for babes, and strong meat for full grown men.

To the same effect are those comparisons of the Christian state to a race, in which the runner may be hindered, and fail to receive the prize; to a warfare and a battle, in which the champion may be worsted. But in the 6th, 7th, and 8th chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul fully and plainly sets forth the whole matter. He there describes the condition of man, with the carnal and the Divine nature struggling together within him for the mastery. And he refers the character and the issue of this conflict to the will of man made free by the Spirit of God to choose between good and evil; to submit to the lusts of the old and carnal nature; or to renounce that fatal subjection, and to follow the guidance of the Spirit of light and life. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey;

whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness." When we have made this good and wise choice of the Lord to be our God, and of the Holy Spirit to be our Guide and Teacher, then, mystically, and by profession, we are dead unto sin; and the mortification of the carnal nature begins, and is carried on to its entire destruction. "For if ye live after the flesh ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." Rom. viii, 13, 14.

On this, as on every other Christian doctrine, the language of the Prayer-Book is but the echo of the Bible. Art. 9, "Of Original Sin," says, "This infection of nature doth remain, yea, in them that are regenerate." And Art. 15 declares, "But all we the rest (although baptized and born again in Christ) yet offend in many things; and if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."

In the Baptismal Service, the prayer is made for the candidates, "that the old Adam may be so buried that the new man may be raised up in them: that all sinful affections may die in them, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in them: that they may have power and strength to have victory, and to triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh." The closing exhortation states, "Baptism representeth to us our *profession*, which is to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto Him; that as He died, and rose again for us, so should we who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness; *continually mortifying all our evil and corrupt affections*, and daily proceeding in all virtue and godliness of living."

According to this service, every person rightly baptized is dead unto sin, just as Isaac was dead unto his father when bound and stretched upon the altar, and the arm of the faithful Patriarch raised to execute the command of God. In this instance, Isaac was dead in the purpose and intention of his believing father. He had been wholly and entirely given up. So when the world, the flesh, and the devil, are heartily and sincerely renounced in Baptism, sin is dead to us in our will, purpose, and intention. We are no longer its servants; we no longer submit to its power. But we have chosen the Divine Life—the adoption to be the sons of God—for our condition; the Lord to be our God; and the Holy Spirit to be our Leader and Guide. And we have vowed to wage an unceasing warfare against the carnal nature, the body of sin, *with which we are still oppressed*. The *actual* death of sin results from the faithful discharge of this vow, from the successful conduct of

this warfare. We must so contend as to "triumph against the devil, the world, and the flesh." We must "continually mortify all our evil and corrupt affections." The business and the probation of every man in this world is to carry out, and bring to full effect, this Baptismal profession: so that, by the mighty power of the Holy Ghost working in and with us, we may overcome, mortify, and kill all the evil of corrupt nature; and substitute for that evil, purity, goodness, and every Divine affection; and become in all things like unto our Saviour Christ.

The Communion Office of the Church is constructed upon the recognition of the same immutable truth, of the coëxistence of the carnal and the Divine nature in the regenerate. And it is utterly irreconcilable with the systems which deny that truth. For it requires every communicant to come to the altar of God with the most humiliating confession of personal guilt and unworthiness. If, therefore, men were made perfectly just and holy, immaculate and without sin, by the Sacrament of Baptism, by the Pseudo Sacrament of Penance, or by the exercises of a revival meeting, then these righteous persons could not lawfully be admitted to the communion of the faithful. For, in order to join that communion, and to partake of the body and blood of Christ, they would be compelled to use a confession which in their case would be false and hypocritical. And all the Liturgies in the world are, and always have been, characterized by this same feature. The universal Church, therefore, has made no provision whatever for the entertainment on earth of this class of persons; for it nowhere recognizes the existence of such a class. The true members of Christ's Church are adopted children of a Heavenly Father, who bears with their waywardness, rebukes their sin, chastens them in his love, instructs their ignorance, calls them to repentance when they go astray, and, while they submit to the guidance of His Spirit, leads them from conquest to conquest over the evil of their nature, and thus reinstates them in the likeness of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven.

BAPTISM THE NEW BIRTH.

6th. Our sixth proposition affirms that the Church of Christ, with all its appliances of faith and holiness, has been appointed as the last, the fullest, and the most perfect of the means and instrumentalities for the nurture and development of the Divine Life, from its embryo existence as a power in the soul of man, through all the successive stages of growth, to the maturity of perfect manhood in Christ Jesus: and to be introduced into that Church by Baptism is the second birth—the birth of water and of the Spirit.

A clear apprehension of this final proposition, taken in connection with all that has been heretofore proved, will put an end to several mischievous *isms* and logomachies, and will take from true Christian people the source of much painful jealousy and suspicion. But we have no thought of recommending this proposition in a spirit of compromise, as a means of reconciling contending parties. Truth can make no compromise. Unless this proposition be true, it ought not to be received for any purpose. But if it be true, then all should heartily receive it, and rejoice in this additional proof that the truth will make us free from many hurtful delusions.

The Church of Christ is represented to us in Scripture by all those varied figures and illustrations which convey the ideas of unity, nurture, and protection. It is a Garden, and a Vineyard, where the plants are cultivated and tended with unremitting care, in every stage of growth, from the planting of the seed to the fullest maturity of fruitfulness. It is a Sheepfold, where the kindest nurture is applied to the lambs of the flock, and where the care of the Divine Shepherd is manifested in the tenderest and most affecting manner. It is an Ark, in which a remnant is saved from destruction, and where the food which may sustain life for so long a period is amply provided. It is a Field, in which are the growing plants which have sprung from the seed, and are ripening for the harvest. It is, last of all, and chiefly, a Kingdom, in which is included every age and condition of humanity; and which is put at all points in direct antagonism with the world.

It will be observed that every one of these representations of the Church presupposes the existence of something which has life, to be the subject of nurture and protection. The Garden, the Vineyard, and the Field are but the places where living seeds or plants germinate, grow, and are cultivated. The Ark does not produce, but merely secures and protects its living tenants. The Sheepfold, the City, and the Kingdom, do not bestow life, but simply nurture, protect, and defend the subjects of that life which is derived from a higher source. These representations, therefore, teach us that the Church of Christ is the appointed place in which the Divine Life in the soul of man is to be nurtured, developed, and brought to the maturity and perfection of Christian character, to the full proportions of a perfect man in Christ Jesus. To this effect precisely is the language of the Apostle, describing the purpose of the entire organization of the Church. "He gave apostles, and prophets, and evangelists, and pastors, and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." Ephesians iv, 11, 12.

Now as faith in Jesus Christ is the exclusive mean of salva-

tion to those to whom the knowledge of Christ has been sufficiently proposed; and yet the Spirit of God may effect that salvation in some other way in those to whom this knowledge has not been brought: so the Church of Christ is the exclusive mean of salvation to those to whom it is sufficiently proposed; (he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;) yet the same Holy Spirit may, without the Church, nurture and bring to full maturity the Divine Life in the souls of those to whom the Church, as Christ's institution, has not been sufficiently proposed. But when the Gospel defines the terms of salvation, it speaks, of course, and only, to those who hear the Gospel. It is not addressed to those who cannot hear it; and says nothing, therefore, about the provision which in the Divine economy is made for them.

We are now prepared to appreciate the force, beauty, and expressiveness of the illustration employed by our blessed Lord in his conversation with Nicodemus, to explain the nature of the Divine Life, and the necessity for the introduction of the subject of that life into His Church or Kingdom, by a second birth. That illustration does not differ at all, in the sense and meaning intended to be conveyed, from all the other representations of the same subject which we have already examined.

We have seen that the analogy between the Divine and physical life of man, is frequently introduced in the inspired word, and is carried out to the utmost minuteness of comparison. Now recollect that it has been fully proved that the Divine Life as a germ—the capacity for holiness, the power to know and to do good, to know and to love God—is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to human nature, to every soul that is born into the world. How this Divine Life is to be nurtured and developed, *so as to effect the salvation of its subject*, is the purport of our Lord's communication to Nicodemus.

To convey His meaning, the Saviour here uses the illustration of the physical life of man, so frequently employed in other portions of the Bible. He tells the Jewish ruler that under the new economy, which He came to introduce, every man who would enter into the kingdom of God must be born again; must be introduced into that kingdom as a little child, by a second birth, a birth of water and of the Spirit. The analogy is most forcible and expressive, and has been strangely misunderstood. In entire oblivion of the familiar facts of the case, the *birth* of a child has been confounded with its *life*, and our Lord's words interpreted as if these two things were one and the same. But we know that the birth of a child is the result and consequence of its previous life, not the occasion of that

life. It is required to be born because it is a living creature, which, having passed through an embryo existence, must now, *by birth*, be placed in *new relations*, and under the power of new influences and agencies, *adapted to its further and full development and perfection*.

Our blessed Lord understood the force and meaning of the words and illustrations which He employed. When He speaks of a second birth, therefore, He evidently refers to something in the spiritual life analogous to the first or physical birth. As by the first birth the living creature, the natural man, is introduced into the world, in order that it may attain to the perfection of manhood ; so, by the second birth, of water and of the Spirit, the new creature, the subject of the Divine Life, is introduced into the Church of God, there to be trained and nurtured, under fitting influences, to the perfection of manhood in Christ Jesus.

Under the Christian dispensation, this new birth of water and of the Spirit is just as essential to the development and perfection of the Divine Life in the soul of man, as is the birth of a child into the world, from the womb of its mother, essential to the development and perfection of the natural life. The still-born child is born indeed, but derives no benefit from its birth. Only the quick, the living child, must needs be born in order that it may continue to live and grow by the supply of appropriate sustenance to every power and faculty.

The efficient Agent in this new birth, this incorporation of the subject of the Divine Life into the body of Christ, is the Holy Spirit ; "for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body." 1 Cor. xii, 13. The Holy Ghost is the ever present and only efficient Administrator in all Christian ordinances. By the ministry of the Holy Ghost it is that He, the God-Man, who has ascended into the heavens, where He ever liveth to make intercession for us, is present nevertheless on earth, according to his most sure promise, in the assemblies of his faithful people ; is formed in the heart of each believer ; feeds, nurtures, and presides over His Church. In like manner the Holy Ghost is the true Minister in the mystery of the second birth. He gives authority to the human minister to act in the name of Christ. He sanctifies the water to the mystical washing away of sin. He comes with new power and more abundant grace into the soul of the newborn, enabling him to carry out the Baptismal profession, and to live according to God's law, and as the adopted child of a Heavenly Father.

When our Divine Master informed Nicodemus of the necessity of this new birth of water and of the Spirit, the Jewish ruler was confounded, as all his countrymen were, at a doctrine

so disparaging to the Mosaic economy, and which evidently looked to a termination of the peculiar privileges of the Jews. As a child of Abraham he was entitled to enter into that kingdom which God had heretofore established on the earth. In circumcision he received the effectual sign of his admission into that kingdom. He had grown up to be a scribe, and teacher, and ruler in the same. He understood very well how a converted Gentile might be born again into the family and kingdom of God. For the thing itself, and this figurative description of it, were familiar to all the Jews of that day. But that Nicodemus, a Jew, and *a ruler of the Jews*, should be bound to submit to the same great change, seemed to him to be as strange and unnatural as for a grown man to enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born. The same humbling and most unexpected feature in the Christian doctrine, that in the new dispensation the peculiar privileges of the Jew were to be annulled, and that all men alike must submit to the same terms of salvation, hung like a veil before the hearts of the ancient people, and prevented them from seeing the glorious light that was shining in their midst.

It was necessary that all men, Jews and Gentiles, should be born again into the new kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in order that the Divine Life in every man should be nourished by Divine grace conveyed to the soul through the instituted channels of that grace. In no other way, under the Christian economy, could that life be sustained, developed, and carried forward through all the stages of growth to the maturity of manhood, to the fullness of the stature of Christ.

In exact accordance with this plain and simple teaching of the Bible is the language of the Prayer-Book. Nowhere is the Divine Life said to be given or begun in Baptism. But the new birth—the introduction into the Church which is the body of Christ—the solemn adoption to be the children of God—is invariably made to be coincident with that sacrament. And instead of grace being then for the first time imparted, it is positively asserted, in the 27th Article, that then “Grace is increased.”

Such is Baptismal Regeneration, in the sense of the Bible and the Church. This meaning is the only one that satisfies the language used by our blessed Lord, and corresponds with the physical analogy by which He was pleased to illustrate the mysteries and the doctrines of His kingdom. This meaning, and this alone, agrees with the numerous similitudes in the inspired word, already referred to, by which the Divine Life in the soul of man, and the relation of that life to the Church of God, are at large described. By every one of these similitudes the

Church is presented to us as the place and the agency by which the Divine Life previously received is nurtured, sustained, and developed. This meaning alone concurs with the analogy of faith, leaving to every other truth of the Gospel its fit and appropriate place. Make the beginning of the Divine Life in the soul to be in Baptism, or at Conversion, and we will be forced either into Pelagianism,—holding that man in his natural state, without the grace of Christ, can turn, repent, believe, and do good works acceptable to God,—or into the most revolting form of Calvinism,—believing that God created the greater part of mankind under a preordained necessity of damnation, and that in His tenderest offers of mercy to these reprobates, the Just and Holy One does but mock at the involuntary impotence and misery of His creatures.

Pelagianism must be a consequence of the first supposition, because where there is no spiritual life there can be no capacity to hear, receive, and obey the Gospel; just as where there is no natural life there is no capacity to receive impressions from external objects. “The things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God.” “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” 1 Cor. ii, 11, 14. If therefore there exists in man a power to hear, receive, and obey the Gospel, *independent of the Divine Life imparted by the Spirit of God*, then such power must be inherent in the natural man; which is contrary to the Scriptures just cited, and to the Catholic Faith; and is the very proposition that constitutes the Pelagian heresy. But we know that this power both exists and is exercised in persons unbaptized. Therefore, either the Pelagian heresy must be true, or the theory which makes the beginning of the Divine Life in the soul to be at Baptism, must be false.

The second alternative, fixing the beginning of the Divine Life at the *Conversion* of the adult subject, by inevitable necessity excludes the rest of mankind from the capacity to entertain the offers of salvation, which is the extreme Calvinistic theory. But both of these dogmas are contrary to the Catholic Faith, and must be rejected along with the interpretation of Scripture, which implies both or either of them.

Again, the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, as above explained, is the only view of this subject that corresponds with the phenomena of universal humanity. That the fruits of the Spirit, as enumerated by St. Paul, are exhibited by all men of every nation, at various periods of their lives, and *especially in childhood*, is a simple fact, which the experience of the whole world attests. That the Gospel itself appeals to every human

being, with the assumption that he has previously received a spiritual power and discernment to hear, feel, understand, and obey its admonitions, is apparent to every reader of the Gospel. The Calvinist, indeed, manages to account for these facts by a newly invented distinction of his own between common and special grace; the former being just sufficient to damn its subject, the latter enough to necessitate his salvation: thereby emulating or exceeding the impiety of those Corinthians who undertook to divide Christ the Lord; for this system seeks to divide the Eternal Spirit! But he who asserts that the Divine Life is first and only imparted in Baptism, has not even this miserable shift with which to account for the facts that he cannot deny.

We were pained to find the able Editor of one of our soundest periodicals giving the sanction of his authority to a very confused statement of an English dissenting journalist, in which the birth of water and of the Spirit, the introduction of the subject of Divine Grace into the Church and family of God, is sneeringly spoken of as "merely a sort of *external* or *relative* regeneration, a regeneration of *mere relations and circumstances*," in contradistinction to the figment of a new life imparted in Baptism, which the writer terms "an actual regeneration."

Has the Church, then, the mystical body of Christ, fallen so low in the estimation of any of her loyal children, that to be made a member thereof, and the consequent recipient of such great and precious privileges, is considered so slight a thing, and that the words in which this event is described are declared to be "a trifling with very solemn language!"

It is true, indeed, that the natural birth of a child is but a change of *relations*, but that change involves the continued existence and future well-being of its subject. To be changed from a servant of the devil and an heir of death into a child of God and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, *is a mere change of relations*. But those relations, on either side, are of the most awful character. Noah and his family, enclosed in the ark, were in a different relation to the deluge from the rest of the inhabitants of the earth. But *that relation involved the salvation of those by whom it was sustained*.

The truth is, the English dissenting writer did not know the proper, and original, and simple meaning of the word he was using. He conceived of that word only in the sense given to it by the popular theology of dissent. Hence he entirely misapprehended the doctrine of the Church. The American Editor has done injustice to himself, and to "the great majority of the Church in this country," by his too hasty adoption of the classification and definitions of this writer. The principal er-

ror of the statement thus inadvertently endorsed consists in the assumption that a change of relations is of necessity merely formal and external. Such an assumption involves a sad confusion of ideas. No real transaction in the Church of God, done by the command of Christ, and by the ministry of the Holy Ghost, *can be merely formal and external*. A Divine power, an influence for eternity, involving the issues of life and death, are inseparably attached to every sacrament and ordinance of our holy religion. To ascertain the precise virtue and signification of each one of these sacraments and ordinances, is not to eviscerate them of their force, but it is to recognize the sternest responsibility under which Almighty God has placed His creature man ; to learn and obey the truth : soberly and diligently discriminating that truth from the fallacies on either hand with which the devil ever seeks to simulate and thereby to discredit and destroy it.

The doctrine of baptismal regeneration—that a man must be born again of water and of the Spirit—that the Church is the appointed medium of salvation to those to whom it is proposed—is emphatically and specifically the great Church doctrine, in contradistinction to all the modern varieties of the loose theology of dissent. In this doctrine is involved many of the contested questions between these two systems in relation to the Ministry, the Sacraments, and the nature of Faith. It is therefore a fundamental verity—a mode of statement of a truth which is contained in more than one article of the Creed. It asserts and maintains the union which God has established between the power and the form of godliness. It repels at once the wild fanaticism which affects to be so spiritual that it must needs despise and reject the institutions of the Almighty ; and the cold rationalism which would discharge the Spirit of God from His effective and essential agency in all the work of man's salvation. The doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration, truly understood, keeps together the things which God has joined ; sets forth, that, under the Gospel, the operations of the Spirit of God in man's salvation have been connected with the institutions of the Gospel. He, therefore, who describes Baptism as nothing more than a form, or empty sign, as merely a thing of externals, insults and degrades the Gospel of salvation.

Baptism, like all the other institutions of the Gospel, is both corporeal and spiritual. It is “an outward and visible sign,” “effectual” to the production of the thing which it signifies. For the Spirit is the true and efficient Administrator of the Sacrament. The Spirit effects the new birth—incorporates the Baptized into the body of Christ—bestows a larger measure of His holy influences adapted to the state and circumstances of the

recipient, and continues to give power and efficacy to all the future discipline of the heir of salvation.

When a Churchman, forgetting the essential distinction between Life and Birth, inadvertently confounds these two things, under the name of Baptismal Regeneration, and thus admits in part the specific Romish theory of salvation, and systematically adheres to this definition, he brings a new and undeserved odium upon the truth; gives occasion to the enemies of that truth to triumph; and, if he continues to be a Churchman, commits himself to many irreconcilable contradictions and inconsistencies.

But the admission of this one point of Romish doctrine is very apt to lead to much further departures from the truth. The errors of Romanism, however inconsistent with the truth held in connection with them, are very consistent with one another. They compose a logical scheme of falsehood, the parts of which are closely woven together. This doctrine, that the Divine Life is first imparted in Baptism, is a seminal and prolific principle of error. The earnest but unbalanced mind, which is once thoroughly committed to the belief of this principle, will be led on, step by step, to the adoption of its dependent falsehoods; until, in despair of reconciling the supposed truths of God with each other, or with the plainest dictates of right reason, the victim of this delusion surrenders himself and all his heaven-derived faculties to the unresisted guidance of ignorant, corrupt, and unprincipled men.

The doctrine of Christ is not so taught by the Church of Christ. That in Baptism the subjects of Divine Grace receive the seal of their adoption into the family of God; that they are thereby made the acknowledged children of a Heavenly Father, entitled to all the privileges and graces of His household: that they then enter upon a Divinely established course of parental training, by which the corruption of their nature is to be purged away; by which, when they sin, they are to be chastened, rebuked, and summoned to the healthful discipline of repentance, with the full and unqualified assurance of the favor and loving kindness of their Heavenly Father when they do repent: that the abiding presence and effective power of the Holy Ghost to carry on this training, and make it effectual to salvation, is abundantly vouchsafed to its subjects: this is the teaching of the Church of Christ; this is the way of salvation to which she points the redeemed of the Lord; this is the blessed condition, the glorious distinction, of the Baptized children of God.

The same Church calls upon every human being to hear and obey the Spirit of God speaking within him. Every good

thought and desire, every pure and holy affection that stirs the heart of man, is the witness of the presence of that Spirit, and of His power to sanctify and save. He who refuses to be led by this Divine Spirit of light and life into all holy obedience, fatally sins against the Holy Ghost, and consigns himself to the perdition that must ensue.

And now, dear reader, make this one practical and pregnant application of all that we have been learning together. Remember that you are not to postpone the work of your salvation until the Spirit is bestowed upon you at some future period. For that Spirit, if not grieved away, already dwells within you. Follow its guidance, and you shall be led to holiness here and to heaven hereafter. You are not to look for a future beginning of the Divine Life in your soul. That life exists already, rendering you capable of knowing and of obeying the truth. That life, by your care and diligence in the use of the appointed means of grace, is to be nurtured and nourished to the full maturity of the Christian character, and to a meetness for heaven and eternal joys ; or by your neglect and sin, that life is to be extinguished, and your soul sunk into the darkness of an endless death. If heretofore you have refused to permit that life to be sustained by the heavenly nutriment of Divine grace, but have suffered sin to reign in your mortal body, then you must be *converted* and live, or you must perish in your iniquity with an everlasting destruction.